

LIVING WITH CANCER REFLECTED IN JOHN GREEN'S THE FAULT IN OUR STARS (2012): A HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY APPROACH



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TESTIMONY

I hereby declare that this research paper titled “**Living with Cancer Reflected in John Green’s *The Fault in Our Stars (2012): A Humanistic Psychology Approach***” submitted to the Department of English Education, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta is a record of original work done by me under the guidance of Mr. Dr. M. Thoyibi, MS and Mr. Titis Setyabudi, S.S. M. Hum.

The information and data shown in this research paper is authentic to the best of my knowledge. This research paper is not submitted to any other university or institution for the award of my degree, diploma or fellowship or published any time before. Hence, later, if it is proven that there are some untrue statements in this testimony, I will hold fully responsible.

Surakarta, 19 April 2016



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**LIVING WITH CANCER REFLECTED IN JOHN GREEN'S
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ABSTRAK

Studi ini adalah tentang Living with Cancer in John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012) yang dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan Humanistic Psychology. Tujuan studi ini adalah untuk mengetahui respon pertama dari setiap karakter ketika mereka mengetahui bahwa mereka mengidap penyakit kanker, bagaimana setiap karakter hidup bersama kanker, dan keprihatinan penulis tentang kanker berdasarkan pendekatan Humanistic Psychology oleh Carl Rogers. Penelitian ini termasuk dalam penelitian kualitatif. Data primer dari penelitian ini adalah novel karya John Green berjudul *The Fault in Our Stars* yang diterbitkan pada tahun 2012, sementara data sekunder dari penelitian ini adalah sumber lain yang terkait dalam studi ini, seperti: website, kamus dan beberapa buku yang mendukung penelitian ini. Peneliti menarik tiga kesimpulan dalam penelitian ini. Pertama adalah respon pertama dari setiap orang ketika mereka mengetahui bahwa mereka mengidap kanker. Kedua adalah bahwa pasien kanker akan merasa putus asa dan kehilangan harapan untuk hidup. Ketiga adalah bahwa di dalam novel tersebut, penulis ingin mendukung pasien kanker dalam melawan kanker, bukan untuk menyerah menghadapi kanker.

Kata Kunci: Kanker, *The Fault in Our Stars*, Humanistic Psychological

ABSTRACT

This study is about Living with Cancer in John Green's The Fault in Our Stars (2012) which is analyzed by using Humanistic Psychology approach. The objectives of the study are to know the first response of every character when they know they get cancer, how the characters live with cancer, and the writer concerns about the cancer part based on humanistic psychological approach by Carl Rogers. This research belongs to qualitative research. The primary data of this research is The Fault in Our Stars by John Green's in 2012, while the secondary data of this research are other sources related to the study, such as: website, dictionary and some books which support this research. The researcher draws three conclusions in this research. First is the response of person when they know they get cancer. Second is that cancer patient would feel desperate and lost their hope to live. Third is that in the novel, the author wants to support the cancer patient to live with cancer, not to give up.

Keywords: Cancer, The Fault in Our Stars, Humanistic Psychological

1. INTRODUCTION

The Fault in Our Stars is an interesting novel to read, because it tells us about the struggle of life. It is about patient who lives with cancer, but it is not too much about cancer. There is about friendship and love story too. John Green is the author of the novel. *The Fault in Our Stars* is the sixth novel by John Green. John Green makes the perfect combination of his novel, so it can attract the teenager to read his novel.

The Fault in Our Stars is a novel by John Green and it was published in 2012. It is the best New York Times bestselling in 2012. The novel consists of 318 pages and twenty five chapters. *The Fault in Our Stars* is a novel about a patient with cancer, named Hazel Grace Lancaster who had lived for thirteen years with terminal illness. This novel is interesting, because it tells us about the struggle of Hazel to fight cancer and to survive. She uses portable oxygen tank because there is a problem with their lungs. She should attend *Support Group* session once a week, until she meets with the one she loves, his name is August Waters. They fall in love each other. Because of that reason, they want to live longer or even live together forever to share their love and happiness. Both of them support each other to fight their illness. Their parents also agree with their relationship and support them.

Before I write this research paper, I have found a previous study about *The Fault in Our Stars* novel. That is *Young Adult Novels about Death and Dying: Arguments for Reading about Terminal Illness and Suicide* by Matthew I. Johnson in 2014. Matthew compares the two novels from John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* and Jay Asher's *Thirteen Reasons Why* and analyzed the content about terminal illness and suicide.

According to WHO (www.who.int) cancer is a terminal illness and include as a large group of disease that affect any part of body. The other name of cancer is malignant tumours and neoplasms. It happens because the abnormal cells grow beyond their usual boundaries, which affect other part of body, and spread to other organs, the latter process is called metastasizing. Metastases are the main cause of death from cancer. Cancer becomes the most cause death in the world, at least 8,2 million people deaths in 2012. The most common cancer caused deaths are cancer of: Lung (1.59 million deaths), Liver (745 000 deaths), Stomach (723 000 deaths), Colorectal (694 000 deaths), Breast (521 000 deaths), Oesophageal cancer (400.000 deaths)

Cancer is an illness which comes from one cell. The cell is transformed from normal cell become tumour cells with multistage process, typically a progression from a pre-cancerous lesion to malignant tumours. It can happened because of generic factors and three categories of external agents, including: (1) Physical carcinogens, such as ultraviolet and ionizing radiation, (2) Chemical carcinogens, such as asbestos, components of tobacco smoke, aflatoxin (a food contaminant) and arsenic (a drinking water contaminant); (3) Biological carcinogens, such as infections from certain viruses, bacteria or parasites.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The type of research method is qualitative research. Object of the study is divided into two, formal object and material object. The formal object is living with cancer. The material object is a novel written by John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars*. This novel was published in 2012. The novel consists of 318 pages and twenty five chapters. This paper focuses on the illness which spreads in every

chapter of the novel. There are two data sources which are needed to conduct this research. They are primary data sources and secondary data sources. The primary data source is John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* novel (2012) published by the Penguin Group: New York. The secondary data sources are taken from other sources related the study, such as: website, dictionary, and some books which support the research. In collecting data, the researcher takes some steps as follow: 1) Reading the novel *The Fault in Our Stars* repeatedly, 2) Taking notes of important part in both primary and secondary data, 3) Determining the characters of the novel, 4) Arranging the data into several parts based on its classification, 5) Classifying data by determining the relevant data. The technique of data analysis, the researcher uses three processes which relate to each other, such as data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 First Response of Character to Cancer

The Fault in Our Stars has some characters, starting from the main characters until the support characters. The story is about cancer patient, so most of the characters are cancer patient. Every character has different response toward their own illness.

a. Shocked

Hazel Grace Lancaster is the main character. She is sixteen years old. Hazel was diagnosed with Stage IV thyroid cancer when she was thirteen. Thyroid is a gland in our neck. So Hazel has cancer in her neck. The cancer is in Stage IV. Hazel is lucky because she is safe after the surgery.

I told Augustus the broad outline of my miracle diagnosed with Stage IV thyroid cancer when I was thirteen. (TFIOS: 24).

It means that Hazel had understood what the impact of her illness is. Hazel understands that she will die after diagnosed with cancer. She is very surprising and she never imagines that she will get cancer. Most people are shocked after they heard about getting cancer, because cancer includes as deathly illness. They believe that they would die soon after getting the cancer. The worst part is when the cancer is near to the last stadium. They just pray that they will get long life. But, most people believe about their death like Hazel does. Hazel is shocked and she has ever lost her hope. She gets her cancer three months after her first period. Of course she thought that she will die soon.

(I didn't tell him that the diagnosis came three months after I got my first period. Like: Congratulations! You're woman. Now die.) It was, we were told, incurable. (TFIOS: 24).

b. Calm

Augustus Waters is the second characters. He is seventeen years old. He was diagnosed with osteosarcoma when he was fifteen. Osteosarcoma is a bone cancer. It usually happens in teenager. The cause of this cancer is like general cancer. It can be genetic or another factors. Augustus got an amputation in his leg after he was diagnosed with osteosarcoma.

"My name is Augustus Waters," he said. "I'm seventeen. I had little touch of osteosarcoma a year and a half ago, but I'm just here today at Isaac's request." (TFIOS: 11).

3.2 Accepting Reality

Cancer is a terminal illness. According to the medical study, everybody has cancer cell. Most of cancer patient should live healthy in order to relieve the cancer cell. Their family always supports anything what they do, as long as it has positive impact for them.

a. Attending Support Group

Hazel's mom believes that her daughter is in depression and need treatment. Hazel's mom asks Hazel to meet her doctor in the hospital and ask some question. Her doctor agrees with her mom that Hazel is in depression, and she needs a treatment. It always happens for people who get cancer. Cancer is deathly illness, so everybody can get depression easily. Hazel's doctor suggests her mother to ask Hazel attends Support Group. It is the best way to prevent Hazel's depression getting worst.

But my mom believed I required treatment, so she took me to see my Regular Doctor Jim, who agreed that I was veritably swimming in a paralyzing and totally clinical depression, (TFIOS: 4).

Before anything bad happens to her only daughter, Hazel's mom asks her to attend Support Group. This group is about patient with cancer, and they share their experience. This group should attend once a week. The former's name is Patrick. He is cancer survivor. He made this group for anyone who gets cancer, in order not to lose their hope.

and that therefore my meds should be adjusted and also I should attend a weekly Support Group. (TFIOS: 4).

b. Being a Cheerful Person

Hazel is a cheerful person. She wants to make her parent happy. She knows that her life is no longer, so she wants to make her parent happy. When her mother asks Hazel to attend Support Group, Hazel attends it. It is held once a week, so Hazel doesn't feel that it is hard thing to do.

"I went to Support Group" (TFIOS: 8).

"I wanted to make my parents happy." (TFIOS: 8).

Hazel's purpose is just to make her parent happy. She wants her parent to be happy to have her as their daughter, even with cancer. Sometimes Hazel doesn't want to do it, but Hazel knows that she can't do anything, so she just does what her parent is saying. Hazel's dream comes true. She can go to Amsterdam. After she knows it, she is very happy. She shouts so loud from her room, and her mother runs quickly if anything happen to Hazel. Her mom said that she can go to Amsterdam. So Hazel is so happy to hear about it. Finally, the first time in her life, she meets her favorite author.

"MOM, I LOVE YOU SO MUCH!" I shouted, and she came to bed and let me hug her. (TFIOS: 127).

c. Being Vegetarian

Most of cancer patients are vegetarian. Hazel is vegetarian. When she visited Augustus' home to eat, Hazel said that she doesn't eat meat. She is doing it in order to prevent her illness. If she

becomes vegetarian, at least her body is health. When she was in the restaurant, she said that she is vegetarian too. So, the waiter gives the best menu for vegetarian.

“I don’t, um, eat meat?” (TFIOS: 28).

“The chef’s choice sounds lovely, but Hazel is a vegetarian.” (TFIOS: 163).

Augustus’ family is vegetarian too. Someone who has family with cancer will understand it. Being vegetarian is healthy life style. His parent doesn’t want their son’s condition getting worst. So the best way to relieve his illness is being a vegetarian. To make it fair, Augustus’ parent is vegetarian too.

“No problem. We’ll vegetarianize some,” she said. (TFIOS: 28).

d. Enough Sleep

As cancer patient, Hazel should get enough sleeping. So, Hazel’s mom is never waking her up. Her Mom’s policy is letting Hazel sleeps as much as she can. Her mom thinks that getting enough sleeping is another way to reduce cancer. At least Hazel gets enough sleeping as the healthy one.

“Mom’s policy was never to wake me up, because one of the job requirements of Professional Sick Person is sleeping a lot.” (TFIOS: 38).

e. Fulfilling Their Wish

There is an organization called The Genie Foundation in America. It grants sick kids with one wish. They grant anything what sick kids want. So, Hazel and another cancer patient have this wish, just once. Hazel wants to meet her favorite author, Peter Van Houten. But he lives in Amsterdam. It is possible to go there using her wish, but she has already used her wish.

“I used my Wish pre-Miracle.” (TFIOS: 80).

Hazel’s parents want to make her daughter be happy, grant her wish as well, because they understand that Hazel won’t live for so long. Hazel wants to go to Amsterdam, visit her only favorite author of her only favorite book, *An Imperial Affliction*. *An Imperial Affliction* is a novel about cancer patient. So Hazel feels that the author knows about cancer best more than anyone else. But Hazel can’t go to Amsterdam due to cancer. After long time debating between her doctors, finally Hazel can go to Amsterdam, with her mom and Augustus.

“Trip’s on,” she said finally. “Dr. Maria called us last night and made a convincing case that you need to live your-” (TFIOS: 127).

3.3 The Underlying Concern in Cancer

The Fault in Our Stars is John Green’s first novel about cancer. The author wants to give special concern about cancer. There are several reasons why the author writes a novel about cancer.

a. Supporting the Patients

The writer is using cancer as the important part of the novel. The writer knows that cancer is deathly illness, and most of the cancer patients are dead, so the writer wants to make strong

character towards the cancer itself. Most people who has cancer always gives up, before they go through it. So the writer wants to tell the reader that life must go on, although they have cancer.

Hazel is the main character of the novel. She is a strong girl and she never gives up in her life. She never gives up to battle with the cancer. At first, she never imagines that she will get cancer. After several months, even years, she understands maybe it is her fate to get cancer. Hazel just goes through her life, without any complaints about her illness. She can accept the illness as well as she can. Not every person in this world can live like Hazel. As different human living in this world, we have different characteristic too. But as human being, it would be good if we can help each other. So that every person who lives in this world has feeling that she is needed.

“Hazel is such an inspiration to me; she really is. She just keeps fighting the battle, waking up every morning and going to war without complaint. She’s so strong. She’s so much stronger than I am. I just wish I had her strength.” (TFIOS: 131).

“You know how I know you’re a fighter? You called a ten a nine.” (TFIOS: 263).

Beside that, the writer’s father-in-law is a cancer surgeon. So the writer wants to tell the reader not to give up living this life in this world. Eventhough we have so much problem, face it gently and don’t be upset.

b. Accepting Cancer as Part of Life

Every human in this world has cancer cell and it would expand or not depends on us to treat our body. But, it can be from our genetic. Eventhough we have cancer, we can’t blame God about what is happening to us. Cancer is living, like us who live in this world. But, cancer only lives through our body, like us who live in the world. We want to take benefit from this world that we are living in, and we always force our world to give anything to us. But, we don’t know how about our world’s feeling. It is the same cancer. Cancer wants to live, and take benefit from our body. Cancer doesn’t know how our body feels when cancer is growing up in our body.

“Even cancer isn’t bad guy really: Cancer just wants to be alive.” (TFIOS: 246).

Getting cancer is a nightmare for everybody. It means that our life would end soon. Hazel thinks that way. When she feels bad about her illness, she can’t do anything. When her mother feels worry about her, she just says sorry. She knows that her fate is from God. She knows that she just accepts the illness as the part of her life. Hazel is doing the best in her life. But it is all useless if God has given her different life. Hazel wants to live longer. She lives healthy to prevent the cancer spread in her body. But, it is just her effort. It is back to her fate from God. Hazel accepts anything in her life.

“I’m sorry, but I can’t do anything about it, okay?!” (TFIOS: 296).

c. Accepting Cancer as Destiny

We ever heard that fate can be changed if we put an effort towards it. Our fate is from God and it has decided long time ago. But some people said that our fate can be changed. It depends on us.

“The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars / But in ourselves.” (TFIOS: 111).

One day Hazel said that there won’t be a place to sit and it will last forever. It means that there is no place we can live forever in this world. We will live forever not in this world, but after we die. It happens based on what we do in this world. Hazel is always doing her best in this world, even with cancer in her body.

“Mom, there won’t be a place to sit and it’ll last forever.” (TFIOS: 274).

Not only Hazel, but also her parents know that Hazel will die soon. Her mother is afraid if Hazel is dying, because she won’t be mother anymore. But later, Hazel’s mom understands that she will be Hazel’s mom forever, with Hazel by her side or not. Hazel is her only daughter and she cannot stop loving Hazel as her daughter.

“Even if you die, I-” (TFIOS: 296).

The Fault in Our Stars means that the fault is not ours, but it happened far above us. The writer wants the reader to live based on our condition, enjoy our live in this world, because it happened just once.

3.4 DISCUSSION

According to the Humanistic Psychology approach by Carl Rogers which is used, humanistic psychology is a self-determination of an individual, to understand the process of life and take a hand in their own psychological problem. *The Fault in Our Stars* novel explain about the phenomenon. It tells about Hazel’s life with cancer. She is sick from cancer in her body, but not in her psychology, because she can think logically. Most of people desperate because of this deathly illness, but Hazel is not. She knows that cancer is a part of God’s destiny. She knows that cancer is a living creature from God, but she lives in her body. Hazel enjoys living his life, because she has good family and good friends. Sometimes, she wishes to die, but it happens when she is in pain. She can’t take it anymore, so she wishes to die. But it doesn’t happen in a long time, because when she is cured, she thanks to God for her life. Rogers’ view in human nature as an individual who is growing up based on their personal experiences in the past. Hazel who has lived three years with cancer, realizes that her life is a fate from God. When she was fourteen, she even wished to die. She experienced her bitter part in her life. The actualizing tendency is a motivation in every individual and it purposed to develop individual’s potential as much as possible. In this case, Hazel is a cancer patient. She knows that she no longer lives and she will die soon, so she is doing positive activity to fill her daily life. Her mother asks her to attend Support Group. Rogers mentions the functioning person is when she is increasing openness to experience, increasingly existential living, increasing trust in his organism and freedom. In this case, Hazel always accepts her destiny from God. It makes her open minded in every situation. When Augustus is sick because of his cancer, Hazel said to him that cancer is not a bad guy and cancer just wants to live in his body. It means that Hazel understands that she can’t be against her fate from God.

Psychology of literature means that the psychology studies from the character as the creative process or the literature effect for the reader (Wellek and Warren, 1942: 75). This study focuses on the psychology of the character, in this sense that the novel represents an illustration of the psychology phenomenon how an individual lives with cancer.

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis in the previous chapter, this study comes to the following conclusions. Firstly the response of person when they know they get cancer, is divided into two namely shocked and calm. Most people are shocked when they first know they get cancer. They feel that they do not live longer. They will die soon, because cancer is deathly illness. But people who are calm when they first know that they get cancer always live positively. They know that it is all their fate. They believe that there is beautiful reason why God gives them cancer. Secondly cancer patient would feel desperate and lost their hope to live. Cancer survivor who has ever experienced how to live with cancer understands it all. Some of them will make a group called support group. It is a group for cancer patient. They support each other not to lose hope. Thirdly in the novel, the author wants to support the cancer patient to live with cancer, not to give up. Getting cancer does not mean the end of the world. The fact that there is no medicine to cure cancer but just to relieve the pain and make the patient live longer will make the patient lose hope to live. Accepting cancer as part of life will make the patient feel better. They should know that God always has a beautiful reason for us. Accepting cancer as destiny is the best way to live with cancer.

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